

Some Depressing News about Adolescent Depression That Requires Our Time and Attention

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If you were to be asked what the major health concerns are confronting children, teens, and young adults today, improving the mental health of those we care for would likely be at or near the top of the list.

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If you were to be asked what the major health concerns are confronting children, teens, and young adults today, improving the mental health of those we care for would likely be at or near the top of the list. Yet just how prevalent are the mental health needs of our patients? Is it more of our perception or does the evidence bear out and say we have a major problem dealing with the growing trends in mental health disorders in young people today.

Mojtabai et al. ([10.1542/peds.2016-1878](#)) provide us with some troubling data using trend information gleaned from the National Surveys on Drug Use and Health from 2005-2014 involving more than 172,000 teens ages 12-17 and more than 178,000 young adults ages 18-25. The authors show an increase in major depressive episodes increasing from 2005 to 2014 in teens from 8.7% to 11.3%, and a smaller yet significant increase as well in young adults. Even after adjusting for substance use disorders and controlling for socioeconomic confounders, the trends persist.

So what has been done (or not done) about this problem? How many of these teens and young adults sought help, what kind of help (counseling, pharmacotherapy or both), and is there enough service capacity to handle this increase in depression? To help frame the context of the data in this article and to give us some direction as to next steps to remedy this situation that begin with better training of future trainees in this area, child psychiatrist Dr. Anne Glowinski and her colleague Giuseppe D'Amelio offer a commentary ([10.1542/peds.2016-2869](#)) that is also well worth reading in addition to this study.

Never have the mental health needs been more of a priority for all of us to become more facile handling, given the lack of sufficient mental health providers for this younger population confronted with mental health issues—and this article and commentary may be the call to arms that will make changes happen individually and collectively to better help these children not just survive but thrive.

Further Reading

- [Age at Onset of Puberty and Adolescent Depression: “Children of 1997” Birth Cohort](#)
- [Parent Health Literacy, Depression, and Risk for Pediatric Injury](#)

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